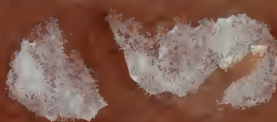


KNOLL PAPERS

*George
Matheson*

"Keep on Keepin' On"
Lyman Abbott



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KNOLL PAPERS

BY LYMAN ABBOTT

"KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON"

A FRIEND recently sent me some verses which he thought interpreted my message, or one of my messages, to the world. The first verse reads as follows:

"If the day looks kinder gloomy
And your chances kinder slim,
If the situation's puzzlin'
And the prospect's awful grim,
And perplexities keep pressin'
Till all hope is nearly gone,
Just bristle up and grit your teeth,
And keep on keepin' on."

In this paper I want to introduce to my readers three men of my acquaintance who have brought this message to me.

A little book in my library, small in size but fuller of value than some larger books, contains the life of John Carter. As a young man, he fell from a tree, dislocated his neck, and was paralyzed from his neck down. He could use neither hands nor feet. For the rest of his life he was a prisoner on his bed. His body was paralyzed, but not his spirit. He made his teeth serve the purpose of hands, and, holding now a pencil, now a brush between his teeth, learned to write, to draw, to paint. The story of his life contains reproductions of his work. "His energy," says his biographer, "was alive, and he began accordingly, drawing sometimes upon a slate, sometimes upon pieces of paper pinned to the pillow, working first with a pencil, and afterwards with water-colors. The first piece produced in this way was a butterfly. . . . The insect was caught in the room, a sixpenny box of paints was sent for, and the drawing made forthwith."

A neighbor of mine in our country home met with a similar accident. It left him some slight use of his arms, but helpless from his shoulders down. He contrived a rack on which a newspaper or a book could be placed before him so that he could read. Reading and calls from his friends were his only diversions. I used to call on him from time to time, and never without getting more from the call than I could give. I never saw him other than cheerful. He was a dispenser of sunshine. His courage overflowed and be-

came a benediction to every visitor. I quite sincerely believe that his influence in the village was greater than any he could have exerted had he spent in active life the years he spent imprisoned in his invalid chair. No preacher could have given with half the eloquence of his cheerful heart the message—

"Just keep on keepin' on."

To the familiar question, Who is your favorite author? I should reply, One of them is St. Paul—evangelist, poet, philosopher. I regard him as one among a score of most illuminating personalities in human history. I have a fair collection of books in my library interpretative of his career and character. Among them one of the first in value is "The Spiritual Development of St. Paul," by George Matheson. It is a study of Paul's writings by a spiritual poet, and discovers and interprets, as only such a poet can, the spiritual experience of this great dramatic philosopher of the Hebrew people.

It must be nearly or quite forty years ago that on a visit to England I made my way to Edinburgh to spend a Sunday there, largely that I might hear George Matheson preach. I then learned for the first time that he was absolutely blind. I could not have guessed it from his conduct of the services. No one led him to the pulpit; no one helped him up or down the pulpit stairs. He seemed to announce his hymns from the hymn-book; he seemed to read the Scripture lesson from the pulpit Bible. I learned afterward that he committed the Scripture lesson to memory, and really recited what he appeared to read, and that he had acquired by practice the ability to go with ease and without aid from the robing-room to and from the pulpit. He was living with two sisters, who gave themselves to their brother. One of them had learned the Hebrew and, I believe, the Greek language that she might read the Bible to him in the original tongues. He is known in all English-speaking lands as a spiritual interpreter of the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New. He is known in most Protestant churches by his famous hymn, "O Love that Will Not Let Me Go." He is known throughout Scotland as one of the most

ON CATALOGUES

It is a gross and pernicious doctrine artfully put forward and religiously maintained by the average business man that the chief end of catalogues is to sell things. The manufacturer of contractors' supplies, drain-pipes, locomotives, wash-tubs, or walking-beams may with some slight shadow of sincerity assume this posture, but we suspect that even his catalogues are subject at least to the inevitable exception. No, catalogues are not meant to buy from, but to live in. The manufacturer of wash-tubs, for instance, runs the ever-present danger of meeting some romantically minded Simple Simon who unwarrantably chooses to view any picture of his product, not as a practical article of commerce, but as the encircling shore of an inland ocean full of piscatorial delights. If such is the fate in store for the creator of tubs, how can those business men who devote their time to the manufacture of even less materialistic devices ever hope to secure their bread and butter through the medium of multicolored pamphlets? How can the growers of flowers, the makers of guns and of tents, of fishing-tackle and motor cars, ever hope to translate the pleasure their catalogues give into so material a thing as dollars and cents?

Omar Khayyâm was a tent-maker, and we suspect that in his time he issued one of the best sporting goods catalogues in history. We are led to this conclusion by the fact that he is better known for his poetry than his tents. We are inclined further to suspect that he chiefly stimulated his imagination by a perusal of his own business catalogue. Certainly his modern successors, and we are generous enough to include in this category almost all those who manufacture anything that can be eaten, worn, seen, or moved about in, are responsible for the stimulation of a great amount of imagination that might well find its outlet in better verse than we see blazoned upon our billboards or displayed on the inner frieze of our trolley cars.

The truth of this statement can readily be tested any day of the year and any place in the world. Just put, since we have been speaking of tent-makers, a sporting goods catalogue on the desk of any man who has the sense to know that rivers are something more than drinking water moving under the impetus of gravitation, that clouds were made for other purposes than to increase the sale of umbrellas, and that chopped liver is not nature's

solution to the problem of feeding baby trout—and watch the result. Or, some time in February, place on this same man's desk a seed catalogue that belongs not to the older generation of commercial uncandor, a generation which reveled in typographical orgies of colored ink and still more highly colored adjectives, but one of these modern seed catalogues, illustrated with faithful photographs that almost smell of wet spring earth, and again note what happens.

If your experiment makes this man forget his own business affairs, how can he be expected to remember the business affairs of the man who at one stroke has knocked him galley west into the middle of the Maine wilderness or the heart of a June garden? It is all very well to "stimulate interest" and "create desire" by the display of one's wares upon the printed page, but what can one expect to happen if the stimulator chooses to remove the stimulatee quite out of the world in which he happens to dwell into some fourth-dimensional existence where black flies are forgotten and the rosebug never troubles?

To throw a good customer into a trance seems to us very poor business. Who can guess at the number of profitless vacations (profitless to the sporting goods manufacturer) that have been spent in office chairs but which might have been spent in the open woods if the commercial stimulus to the imagination had been a little weaker and the stimulus to activity a little stronger! How many country homes have been decorated (in imagination) with plants destined to die unromantically in their native beds, when they might, under less vivid salesmanship, have actually taken root in some back-to-the-lander's garden plot?

Secure in this hypothesis, we can proceed to venture into our pile of spring catalogues with the same spirit of assurance with which the Merrimac launched her iron missiles against the wooden sides of the doomed Cumberland.

After all, we *might* make room for one new rosebush in the bed under the south window. . . .

And our fly-book needs three or four Parmachenee Belles, a Brown Hackle or two, and some No. 14 Black Gnats to make it (temporarily) complete. . . .

If we send the orders to-day, when *can* we get the goods? The mails are so slow!

spiritually eloquent preachers in a land famous from before the days of Chalmers and Guthrie for its pulpit orators. Invited to his home, I found him one of the merriest of social companions. Poet, author, orator, scholar, social companion—and blind! Nothing I have ever read of his has impressed me as equaling in eloquence the eloquent message of his life:

“Just keep on keepin’ on.”

When I first became associated with Henry Ward Beecher in the editorship of what was then the “Christian Union,” it was just beginning to recover from a serious disaster due to a combination of causes, and its future was somewhat problematical. Its two editorial rooms were separated from the business offices only by a low partition, and every inquiry and every complaint came to my ears while I was vainly endeavoring to concentrate my attention on some editorial problem in politics or theology. The composing-room was in the attic, and just off from it was a storeroom full of discarded furniture—left-overs, I suppose, from more prosperous days. I cleared off a space on a discarded desk in this storeroom and retreated there on Monday morning, which was then our day for going to press, in order that I might write undisturbed. One morning I heard the door of this storeroom open, and then a queer scuffling noise upon the floor. Looking up, my eyes were greeted with a most pathetic sight.

A man perhaps between thirty and forty years of age was making his way slowly and laboriously toward me. My first impression that he was a dwarf a second glance corrected. He was on his knees; the legs below the knees were dragging on the floor behind him. Two short sticks serving the purpose of canes or crutches were under his arms, so that he was navigating his way in quadruped fashion. His clothes were scrupulously clean, he had a high forehead, fine hair, and an air of manly refinement illuminated his features with a life that was better than beauty. Whether his face could have been called handsome I did not ask myself then, and I could not tell now. It certainly was attractive. He had for sale some sort of soap warranted to take spots off from clothes. I made a purchase, and we fell into conversation. That morning, I am afraid, the printer had to wait a little for my editorial.

When my visitor learned my name, his face lighted up with a delightful smile of recog-

nition. “I am reading,” he said, “Mr. John S. C. Abbott’s ‘Life of Napoleon Bonaparte,’ and find it very interesting. I have one advantage over you. For you must have many social engagements; but I have none, and so I have my evenings for uninterrupted reading.” I afterwards called on him in his home. He occupied a comfortable and well-furnished flat on Sixth Avenue, and he introduced me to his wife. I asked her if they had any children. She laughed in reply: “He is all the children I want,” she said. And, in truth, it was quite evident that she had to dress and undress her husband as a mother her child or a nurse her patient. He and I became good friends, and when we met, as occasionally we did, on the street or in the cars, we always cordially greeted one another, sometimes to the evident surprise of other passengers. He told me that his nurse had let him fall when he was a baby, and paralysis was the result. It affected not only his limbs but his speech. It was difficult to understand him, for his words came out gurgling and in fragments like water poured out of a bottle turned upside down, and came with contortions of the mouth painful even to look upon, surely hard to endure. But he made a comfortable living by his trade, asked no man’s charity, and was beholden to no one. He set high store by his independence, and told me that when he was twelve years old, determined not to be a burden to his father, he ran away from home. I cannot even now think of that boy on his knees and extemporized crutches stumping away secretly some night from home to make his own way in the world without a queer feeling at the heart like tears and laughter intermingled.

He is no longer living. But I have never ceased to be grateful to him. He did me a world of good. For it was a time of great perplexity and some foreboding. I seemed to myself to have made a failure in the ministry. I wondered whether I was going to fail or to succeed in journalism. The conditions were difficult; the anxieties many; unsectarian journalism a doubtful experiment; and my ideals, both theological and sociological, far from popular. And I needed the message of his quite unconsciously brave life:

“Just keep on keepin’ on.”

There is only one irreparable loss—the loss of courage.

The Knoll, Cornwall-on-the-Hudson.

BELGIUM

FROM THE SPEECH BY ELIHU ROOT, EX-SECRETARY OF STATE, DELIVERED
IN CARNEGIE HALL, NEW YORK, TUESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 15

MEASURED and restrained expression, backed to the full by serious purpose, is strong and respected. Extreme and belligerent expression, unsupported by resolution, is weak and without effect. No man should draw a pistol who dares not shoot. The Government that shakes its fist first and its finger afterward falls into contempt.

Our diplomacy has lost its authority and influence because we have been brave in words and irresolute in action. Men may say that the words of our diplomatic notes were justified; men may say that our inaction was justified; but no man can say that both our words and our inaction were wise and creditable.

I have said that this Government lost the moral forces of the world by not truly interpreting the spirit of the American democracy.

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The American democracy stands for something more than beef and cotton and grain and manufactures; stands for something that cannot be measured by rates of exchange and does not rise or fall with the balance of trade.

The American people achieved liberty and schooled themselves to the service of justice before they acquired wealth, and they value their country's liberty and justice above all their pride of possessions. Beneath their comfortable optimism and apparent indifference they have a conception of their great Republic as brave and strong and noble to hand down to their children the blessings of freedom and just and equal laws.

They have embodied their principles of government in fixed rules of right conduct which they jealously preserve, and with the instinct of individual freedom they stand for a government of laws and not of men. They deem that the moral laws which formulate the duties of men toward each other are binding upon nations equally with individuals.

Informed by their own experience, confirmed by their observation of international life, they have come to see that the independence of nations, the liberty of their peoples,

justice and humanity, cannot be maintained upon the complaisance, the good nature, the kindly feeling of the strong toward the weak; that real independence, real liberty, cannot rest upon sufferance; that peace and liberty can be preserved only by the authority and observance of rules of national conduct founded upon the principles of justice and humanity; only by the establishment of law among nations, responsive to the enlightened public opinion of mankind.

LIBERTY AND JUSTICE

To them liberty means not liberty for themselves alone, but for all who are oppressed. Justice means not justice for themselves alone, but a shield for all who are weak against the aggression of the strong. When their deeper natures are stirred, they have a spiritual vision in which the spread and perfection of free self-government shall rescue the humble who toil and endure from the hideous wrongs inflicted upon them by ambition and lust for power, and they cherish in their heart of hearts an ideal of their country loyal to the mission of liberty for the lifting up of the oppressed and bringing in the rule of righteousness and peace.

To this people the invasion of Belgium brought a shock of amazement and horror. The people of Belgium were peaceable, industrious, law-abiding, self-governing, and free. They had no quarrel with any one on earth. They were attacked by overwhelming military power; their country was devastated by fire and sword; they were slain by tens of thousands; their independence was destroyed and their liberty was subjected to the rule of an invader for no other cause than that they defended their admitted rights.

There was no question of fact; there was no question of law; there was not a plausible pretense of any other cause. The admitted rights of Belgium stood in the way of a mightier nation's purpose, and Belgium was crushed.

When the true nature of these events was realized, the people of the United States did not hesitate in their feeling or in their judgment. Deepest sympathy with downtrodden Belgium and stern condemnation of the in-

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Lyman Abbott.

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